

enthusiasm, well into the last century, for apparent crucifixions and the simulated amputation of noses? The Hunger Artist of Kafka's famous story had, as Jay reveals, many real-life counterparts.

Perhaps, though, taste has changed less than we might suppose. In a postindustrial

society, we gawk not at physical exhibitionism but at frontier science and televised self-revelation. Just as Jay celebrates the Bonassus and the Bold Grimace Spaniard, perhaps some future connoisseur will revel in Dolly the Sheep and *The Jerry Springer Show*.

—EDWARD TENNER

CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

STANDING UP TO THE ROCK.

By T. Louise Freeman-Toole. Univ. of Nebraska Press. 213 pp. \$26

"In our wedding vows," writes Freeman-Toole, a freelance writer and sixth-generation Californian, "my husband and I pledged to live together in a 'green and peaceful place.'" A few years into the marriage, Silicon Valley's sprawl drove them from Santa Cruz. They ended up in an agricultural region called the Palouse, along the Idaho-Washington border. "It was like being able to take our children back to the time we had grown up in—a safer, slower, and kindlier world." Alternately engaging, lovely, frustrating, dense, and thoughtful, *Standing Up to the Rock* recounts this change of worlds.

But not without a good many side trips. Freeman-Toole tells of her ancestors and of her strong emotional response to rugged landscapes. She includes a heroine's journey and a feminist awakening, a tutorial in cattle ranching, and a population of eccentric and fascinating characters, many of whom deserve entire books unto themselves. Some of these tales reach fruition better than others. Occasionally, a character appears with a sketchy introduction, disappears, and pops up again later with biographical back story, as in a screenplay. Freeman-Toole's poetic prose is more than enough to engage the reader without such gimmickry.

The author redeems herself in the last chapter, which is positively elegiac. She quotes her friend Liz Burns, a rancher (and one of those who surely merits her own biography): "Stop thinking in the abstract about the environment, the economy, politics. Start seeing individual porch lights. Care about *these* animals, *these* native plants, *these* people, this perfect place." The admo-

nation made me wonder about those perfect places within us all, and why, when we find them, we are often compelled to leave. It made me contemplate the central theme of this rich book: what it really means to be home.

—ROSANNE CASH

ON MY HONOR:

Boy Scouts and the Making of American Youth.

By Jay Mechling. Univ. of Chicago Press. 323 pp. \$30

At the start of *On My Honor*, Mechling promises to steer a middle course between the right, which sees the Boy Scouts as the solution to America's "character" problem, and the left, which sees them as part of the problem. He calls both of these views skewed, but it is soon clear that he deems the right-wing view considerably more skewed. A former Eagle Scout who is now a professor of American studies at the University of California, Davis, Mechling asserts his bona fides by citing his "progressive male guilt" over the "militarism," "sexism," "homophobia," and "disrespect for real Indians" of his own scouting days. Little has changed, he reports: The similarities between scout camp of the late 1950s and scout camp of the late 1990s are "too many to celebrate a victory of 'progressive' masculinity over Cold War masculinity."

A curious idea, this distinction between "progressive" and "Cold War" masculinity. What he means by the latter is a harder, more macho masculinity, which he discredits as (among other things) a mere contingency of the Cold War. He himself advocates a softer, more tender masculinity, and even tries to claim some of its social-science